

Coffman Urges Super Committee to End Congressional Pensions

(WASHINGTON) –Today U.S. Rep. Mike Coffman, R-CO, sent a letter to the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction asking them to include the elimination of the pension plan that is available to Members of Congress as part of their debt reduction plan. The bipartisan “Super Committee,” comprised of 12 members from the House and Senate, is charged with developing a plan to find at least \$1.2 trillion in savings over the next 10 years.

“I served my country in both the U.S. Army and in the Marine Corps. From the beginning of my military career, I was taught that the fundamental tenets of leadership are to lead by example and to never ask others to do anything that you would be unwilling to do,” Coffman said in his letter. “In these extremely difficult economic times, Congress needs to set an example for the country. I believe that ending our retirement plan would be a good start.”

In September Coffman introduced House Resolution 2913 that would eliminate the Congressional pension plan for federal lawmakers. Coffman said he is building support for the bill and is steadily adding co-sponsors.

While Coffman’s legislation would prohibit current or future members from receiving any credits for additional years of service, it would honor any retirement benefits already accrued before his bill takes effect. Members of Congress are also still required to pay into Social Security and can participate in the Federal Thrift Savings Plan (401k) which is available to all federal employees.

The current Congressional pension program is a defined-benefit retirement plan that gives U.S. Representatives and Senators 1.7 percent of their current \$174,000 annual salary for every year they serve in Congress for up to 20 years, and an additional 1 percent for each year served after the 20 year mark. Members of Congress are required to pay 1.3 percent of their annual salary into the pension plan.

Coffman said that he concedes it could take a long time to get the bill through the legislative process, but is hopeful that the Joint Select Committee will take up his pension-ending proposal because it is a great opportunity to show the American people that Congress is willing to lead by example by eliminating its retirement program.

“Ending the Congressional retirement plan may be little more than a symbolic move toward fiscal responsibility but it will be viewed as important by the American people as a step forward in changing the culture of Washington, D.C.,” Coffman said in the letter.

Please see below for a text of the letter or [click here for a PDF](#) .

November 21, 2011

Dear Members of the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction:

As you finish the monumental task before you, and regardless of what else you may ultimately propose, I urge to show the American people that Congress is serious regarding deficit spending, and that we intend to lead in this matter, by ending Congressional pensions.

I served my country in both the U.S. Army and in the Marine Corps. From the beginning of my military career, I was taught that the fundamental tenets of leadership are to lead by example and to never ask others to do anything that you would be unwilling to do. Today, our nation is mired in debt and we in Congress have to make tough decisions to find a way out of this crisis. This will involve asking the American people to make sacrifices related to their reliance on a government that has grown much larger than our economy will ever be able to support. In these extremely difficult economic times, Congress needs to set an example for the country. I believe that ending our retirement plan would be a good start.

If members of Congress are to be servants of the people, they must not receive a benefit that is generally unavailable to the average American citizen.

I have introduced legislation that will put an end to the retirement plan available to members of Congress, HR 2913. It is my belief that our founding fathers envisioned Congress as a citizen legislature comprised of members who were successful in a career path outside of Congress and who would not be reliant upon their service as an elected United States Representative or Senator to provide them with a retirement.

The Congressional retirement plan gives U.S. Representatives and Senators 1.7 percent of their \$174,000 annual salary for every year they serve in Congress for up to 20 years, and 1 percent thereafter. If a member of Congress served for 20 years, he or she would receive 34 percent of their salary, or \$59,160 per year, and if they served for 30 years they would receive 44 percent of their annual salary, or \$76,560.

If you were to end the pension plan, Members of Congress will still be required to pay into Social Security and may participate in the Federal Thrift Savings Plan, available to all federal employees. We should honor any retirement benefits already accrued by members of Congress, and also reimburse members who have served for less than five years for their 1.3 percent of salary contributions they have already paid into the pension plan but from which they will never realize a benefit.

Ending the Congressional retirement plan may be little more than a symbolic move toward fiscal responsibility but it will be viewed as important by the American people as a step forward in changing the culture of Washington, D.C.

Sincerely,

Mike Coffman

US Congress